

LEARNERS' PERCEPTION ON BILINGUAL APPROACH IN AN EAP CLASSROOM

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Received on 1 April 2018 / Approved on 16 April 2018

ABSTRACT

First language used as a medium of English instruction has been widely used in countries that teach English as a second or foreign language. It is believed that the use of first language can help learners to have access in learning English, increase the motivation as well the confidence. The following research is intended to find out the learners' perception on how Indonesian language is preferable used in their classroom. The 23 respondents were taken from an EAP classroom whose students majoring System of Information and Technology in Bunda Mulia University, Jakarta. The result shown that the learners are mostly used Indonesian when they are having discussion among friends however when they interact with their lecturer they expect to have English in returns. On different setting, the learners also prefer Indonesian language is used when the lecturer explaining vocabulary meaning. The result hopefully may help teachers and educators to see this approach as another alternative teaching aid in order to get a better result in their language classroom.

Keywords: bilingual teaching, language learning, English in Academic Purpose

ABSTRAK

Penggunaan bahasa ibu sebagai bahasa perantara di pengajaran bahasa Inggris telah digunakan di beberapa negara yang mengajarkan bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa kedua atau bahkan bahasa asing. Hal tersebut dipercayai dapat membantu para pembelajar bahasa dalam proses belajar Bahasa Inggris. Selain itu dapat juga membantu meningkatkan rasa percaya diri dan motivasi mereka dalam performa bahasa Inggris. Penelitian berikut ditujukan untuk mencari tahu persepsi mahasiswa ketika menggunakan bahasa Indonesia saat mereka mempelajari bahasa Inggris dalam kelas. Responden yang terlibat sebanyak 23 mahasiswa dari kelas Sistem Informasi di Universitas Bunda Mulia, Jakarta. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa para pembelajar tersebut kebanyakan menggunakan bahasa Indonesia khususnya ketika berinteraksi dengan teman mereka sepanjang mata kuliah Bahasa Inggris berlangsung, namun mereka mengharapkan agar dosen pengajar menggunakan bahasa Inggris ketika mereka berinteraksi. Hasil dari penelitian ini diharapkan penggunaan bahasa Indonesia di dalam kelas bahasa Inggris dapat menjadi alat bantu pengajaran untuk mencapai hasil yang lebih baik.

Kata Kunci: pengajaran bilingual, pembelajaran bahasa, bahasa Inggris untuk akademik

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

English has been taught in higher education not only as part of the curriculum subject but also to increase their English ability in different subjects. Some language skills that are being developed such as speaking and listening, reading and writing,

vocabulary and grammar. In order to assist the learning progress, some of materials have been adapted to meet the language learners' needs. Materials which are designed as English for Academic purpose is selected based on their language proficiency. However, since the material is presented during first and second semester, therefore students who have low level in their English are having difficulties to

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understand the whole lesson. The situation is getting challenged once the students have to face the classroom setting where the teacher applies English as a dominant language used in the classroom.

The problems that most likely occurred when students spend more time to get the meaning either from the teacher's explanation or from their own textbook. If they are passive users of English, delivering a question in English would be the biggest challenge for them. For some motivated students, they would not feel afraid in making mistakes while others may choose to remain silent.

If the situation remains continued, the classroom might be difficult to handle and the students' motivation will tend decreasing. Bilingual approach in this case can be as an alternative way to minimizing the language gap between learners whereas it can also can a teaching – aid. The term “bilingual” was defined by Harmers and Blanc (2000) as an individual who use two languages and “bilingualism” as the study of how two or more languages function in each society (cited in Sipra, 2012).

Furthermore, in EAP classrooms, there are parts from the lesson which explains about grammar and vocabulary usage. These parts require the students to be able in using their cognitive thinking skill especially during the practices. With their language skill gap, there are some students have to struggle more when the lecturer explains the structures and meaning. If English is dominantly used in delivering the lesson, the students will need longer time to fully understand it . In fact, very often, EFL learners are made to feel ashamed of themselves when they cannot produce the language structures required by their teachers, or when they fail to comprehend and follow instructions for various tasks. Such rejection undoubtedly affects learner motivation and is probably the cause of early fossilization that grips many learners during their learning process. Without a well-developed language delivery in the classroom, the learners might fail in passing the final examination at the end of their semester.

This situation brings the bilingual-teaching technique in the English classroom to minimizing the gap among students and between teacher-students and could be used as a scaffolding tool in the EAP classroom.

Research Questions

Based on the issues which occurred in the EAP classroom, therefore the following research is going to find out the answers for the following research questions:

- How do the learners perceive the use of Bahasa Indonesia in EAP classroom?
- Does the result come out positive or negative?

Research Significance

Some professionals in second language acquisition have become increasingly aware of the role the mother tongue plays in the EFL classroom. For example, Dörnyei and Kormos (1998) find that the L1 is used by L2 learners as a communication strategy to compensate for deficiencies in the target language. Nunan and Lamb (1996) students with lower level of English were improved once the mother tongue used in the classroom (cited in Enama, 2016). Therefore, in the EAP setting, the following study would be as an effective tool to help learners who are weak in their English skill and cope other issues dealing with their language learning process

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Bilingualism

Research on using English exclusively or bilingual in the EFL classroom has been very rich and productive in the last three decades. It was started when some research in second language acquisition have succeeded in raising the teacher awareness of classroom teachers that they must understand the implications of language acquisition and how it influenced their students' language development. (Herrel & Jordan, 2012, cited in Enama, 2016). The role of L1 in the context here is mentioned as “scaffolds” defined as “temporary supports, provided by more capable people, that permit learners to perform

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a complex process before they are able to do so unassisted” (Peregory & Boyle, 2013, cited in Enama, 2016). Before the papers discuss about bilingual tehcnique in the EAP class, the following sub-chapters will discuss about bilingualism and second language learning.

Bilingualism in education looks at the pedagogical issues created when children speaking one language at hoome enter a schoold system which operates in another language (Lotherington, 2000, cited in Ellis, 2003; Liddicoat, 1991, cited in Ellis, 2003). The study of bilingualism must be approached as a complex phenomenon which should be studied at several level of analysis, from individual, interpersonal, intergroup, and intersocietal (Hamers, 2000)

The definiton of a bilingual person by Macnamara (1967, cited in Hamers, 2000) mentioned that a bilingual is anyone who possesses a minimal competence in only one of the four language skills, listening ciomprehension, speaking, reading, and writing, in a language other than his mother tongue.

According to Lam (2001, p. 93, cited in Molina, Cañado, & Agulló, 2005), bilingualism “refers to the phenomenon of competence and communication in two languages”. There are many types of bilingual, those are:

- *Equilibrated bilinguals* who have both equal comptence languages
- *Dominant bilinguals* are whose languages are more skillfull than the other one.
- *Coordinated bilinguals* are people who can use the two language in the same situations.
- *Compound bilinguals* are those who can relate and use each language into different context.

Furthermore, *early* and *late* bilinguals are determined *when* they learn each language also whether they learn the languages simulatneously or consecutively. In the process of becoming a bilingual, the individual may develop negative attitudes towards his/her

mother tongue, and become *a subtractive bilingual*. If those attitudes are positive, then he/she is considered an *additive bilingual*.

Bilingual Approach

In the beginning the bilingual method was developed by C. J. Dodson (1967) as a combination of the two most well-know ELT method namely the audio-visual method and the grammar-translation method. The bilingual method applied the traditional three P’s (presentation, practice, and production). Some principles that underly the following method is “the understanding of words and sentences in foreign language which can be made easier by the use of mother tongue. Second, “there is no need to create artificial situations for explaining the meaning of words and sentences of the target language”.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, bilingual approach offers as an alternative tool in order to enhance the learners’ language ability. The first experiment was done by Atkinson (1987) where he suggested nine instances under which the L1 could be used in the EFL class. Those techniques are explained as follows:

1. *Eliciting target language*
2. *Checking comprehension*
3. *Giving complex instruction to basic levels,*
4. *Co-operating in group work situations*
5. *Explaining classroom methodology at basic level,*
6. *Highlighting a recently taught item, checking sense,*
7. *Explaining testing instructions, and*
8. *Developing circumloction strategies.*
9. *Aself-esteem booster for shy students, a teacher strategy for clarifying complex instructons or language items* (cited in Enama, 2016).

Besides techniques applied, there are 7 advantages of the bilingual method of teaching English, those are:

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1. Students become functional bilinguals.
 The following method model will bring positive outcome from the very beginning as part of the learners' journey. When the teacher applies the bilingual technique as a medium language in instruction, this will be a clear model for the learners to emulate.
2. Never miss out a lesson
 Once the learners facing difficulties in understanding the explanation, the bilingual method allows easy glossing of difficult words and efficient explanations of points of grammar. This is proven more effective and optimizing learning opportunities.
3. Give some love to other languages.
 One of the main reasons why do some learners have a low motivation in learning a subject is because they dislike the subjects. This may be since the learning process is complicated. Therefore, by letting the use of L1 in the classroom will show that there are always another way in learning the language effectively.
4. Accessibility
 The bilingual method ensures accessibility, where once the students begins with the daunting task of learning a new language can find a level of familiarity. They can avoid the pressure in acquiring new skills.
5. It's a teacher's tool, not a student crutch
 Though the bilingual method employs the students' native language, it's important to note that it's predominantly the teacher who makes use of L1. This distinguishes it from the grammar-translation method which relies more on rote learning and the translation of texts.
6. Building strong foundations for reading, right from the start.
 The bilingual method makes use the written form of the language from the start. This allows students to begin to

see the shapes of words as they repeat them orally.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The following research is called a quantitative research which focuses on the students' perceptions on bilingual method implementation in the classroom. Furthermore, it is designed to examine how do the students apply L1 in L2 classroom setting.

Research Participants

For the participants, 23 of second semester students who are majoring Information System which are currently taking the subject Business English 2 were selected. The classes are mostly focused on English usage in business setting and parts of the lessons are learning grammar and vocabulary used. For the research purpose, the questionnaire is adapted into Indonesian to get easier understanding from the respondents.

Research Instruments

For the questionnaires, it is designed and divided into three parts. First part is to find out how do the students use L1 in the classroom and how do they perceive their lecturer use L1 during their subject delivery. Second, to see how do the student prefer to use English in the classroom and the last part is to state their opinions based on the lecturer's language preferences. The aim is to identify the preferable situation when the bilingual method applied from the students' perspective.

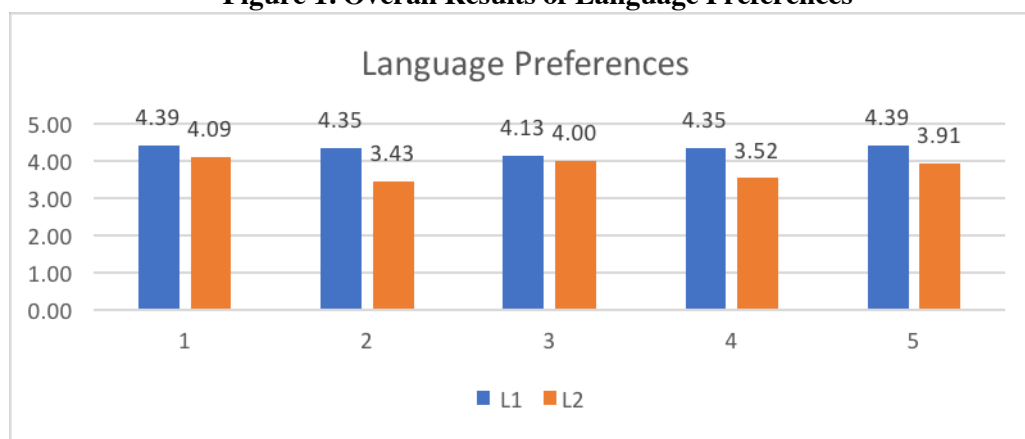
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The following findings shows in overall that the learners prefer to use Bahasa Indonesia (L1) in the classroom rather than English (L2), however the difference is slight in every question-items. The first part of the questionnaire discusses in which situations the learners apply either of the languages most. Such situations described are among friends' discussions, delivering questions to the

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lecturer, grammar and vocabulary explanations, and fluency practices.

Figure 1. Overall Results of Language Preferences

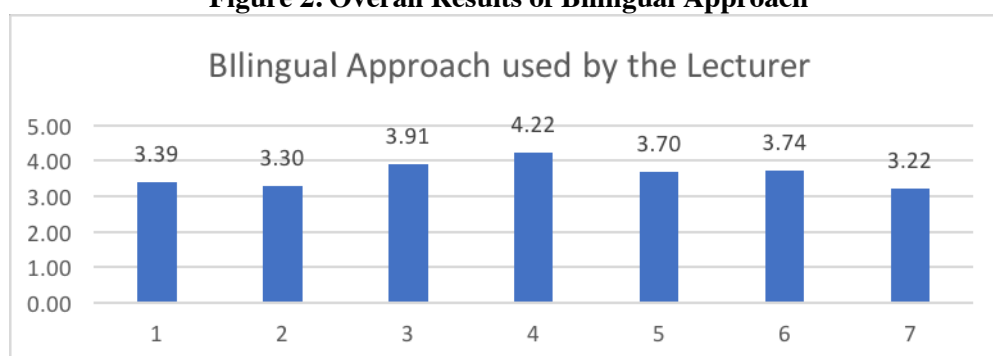


The first question in this part is asking about how often do the learners use Indonesian when they are having discussions among their friends, based on the result there are 60% chose *sometimes* and 39% *always*. The second result shows 52% of the learners speak Indonesian for further clarification to their lecturer, furthermore more than half students prefer to speak Indonesian in explaining grammatical structures, new vocabularies, and in compensating.

In English preferences perceptions, the learners apply English whenever the lecturer instructs them to do so. There are more than 50% who responds from *sometimes* to *always* in the following situations such as giving presentations to delivering role-plays; and practicing English fluency.

The next result discusses about how their perception toward the lecturer's language preferences. The following is the overall result.

Figure 2. Overall Results of Bilingual Approach



From the result above, the learners were asked to give their opinions like when the lecturer is better to use Indonesian language rather than English. The highest selected is in

number 3 which is when the lecturer explaining grammar structures, the second place is when the lecturer is having the discussions with the learners dealing with the

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assignment instruction. However, when the learners use Indonesian, they expect the

lecturer to respond them in English. The following is the detailed responses.

Table 1. Preferences during the Whole Lesson

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Sangat tidak setuju	2	8.7	8.7	8.7
Tidak setuju	2	8.7	8.7	17.4
Netral	6	26.1	26.1	43.5
Setuju	11	47.8	47.8	91.3
Sangat setuju	2	8.7	8.7	100.0
Total	23	100.0	100.0	

The result shows that almost 90% of the students prefer the lecturer to use Bahasa Indonesia in most part of the lesson. For the second question, it asked when the lecturer delivers questions which language the learners

prefer. There are some students choose “neutral” and “agree”. In this part, it can be seen that the lecturer can use either English or Indonesian equally whenever the questions is uttered.

Table 2. Preferences when Delivering Questions

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Sangat tidak setuju	1	4.3	4.3	4.3
Tidak setuju	5	21.7	21.7	26.1
Netral	7	30.4	30.4	56.5
Setuju	6	26.1	26.1	82.6
Sangat setuju	4	17.4	17.4	100.0
Total	23	100.0	100.0	

For the second question, it stated Indonesian is preferable especially when the lecturer explains grammar structure including in providing the examples. This may because

the grammar formulation is difficult to understand, therefore instead of thinking in English, it seems easier when the explanation delivered in Indonesian.

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Table 3. Preferences when Explaining Grammar

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Tidak setuju	1	4.3	4.3	4.3
	Netral	7	30.4	30.4	34.8
	Setuju	8	34.8	34.8	69.6
	Sangat setuju	7	30.4	30.4	100.0
	Total	23	100.0	100.0	

However, the following result shows that the learners prefer the lecturer to use more Indonesian in explaining vocabulary. Even though the vocabulary explanation does not require any specific format therefore the learners might worry they will get

misunderstanding when they listen the vocabulary explanation in English. Other reason may because translating the word is more effective rather than find the similar words in English.

Table 4. Preferences when Explaining Vocabulary

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Netral	3	13.0	13.0	13.0
	Setuju	12	52.2	52.2	65.2
	Sangat setuju	8	34.8	34.8	100.0
	Total	23	100.0	100.0	

At this part, the situation described is whenever the lecturer sends feedbacks during classroom practices, which language that the learners prefer. More than half of the classroom agree for Indonesian. One possible

reason relies, maybe because the learners listening comprehension is varied and they avoid in misinterpretation in understanding the lecturer's comments and feedback during their performance.

Table 5. Preferences when Giving Feedbacks

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Tidak setuju	5	21.7	21.7	21.7
	Netral	4	17.4	17.4	39.1
	Setuju	7	30.4	30.4	69.6
	Sangat setuju	7	30.4	30.4	100.0
	Total	23	100.0	100.0	

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For this section, the situation described is when the lecture explains specific instruction in assignments. There are around sixty-percent of the learners responding “agree” Indonesian used in that situation, the

reason might be similar with the previous one since they want to make sure that they understand every instruction given by the lecturer. Since some instructions are formed in longer speeches and unfamiliar words.

Table 6. Preferences in Giving Oral Instruction in Assignments

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Tidak setuju	5	21.7	21.7	21.7
Netral	3	13.0	13.0	34.8
Setuju	8	34.8	34.8	69.6
Sangat setuju	7	30.4	30.4	100.0
Total	23	100.0	100.0	

The last item discusses in overall learners’ perception, in which language the students would like to have during the English class. Result shown that nearly half of the learners still prefer to have English dominating

in the classroom as well the other half. This may describe that learners are basically motivated to use English in the classroom, even though there are certain situations they want to use Indonesian for specific reasons.

Table 7. Preferences on Language Used

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Sangat tidak setuju	3	13.0	13.0	13.0
Tidak setuju	3	13.0	13.0	26.1
Netral	6	26.1	26.1	52.2
Setuju	8	34.8	34.8	87.0
Sangat setuju	3	13.0	13.0	100.0
Total	23	100.0	100.0	

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings it could be concluded that L1, in this case the Indonesian language, could be used by students as a medium in language teaching especially for learners whose background language are not English. Likewise, Indonesian language could be used as a pedagogical strategy to facilitate students learning and to maximize their engagement in the classroom. The situations when the lecturer is preferable using Indonesian are mentioned from the result above, mostly is in *explaining vocabulary*. On the other hand, the situation where the learners prefer to have more English in situations like *delivering questions* and *giving feedbacks*. On the other hand, the lecturer should also make sure that students are not increasingly or extremely dependent on L1. This balance should be exponential in that as the student's proficiency in the target language increases, the dependence of L1 decreases. Finally, the issue of the role of L1 in the EFL classroom can be further investigated, especially from the lecturers' perspective, to draw a better pedagogical decision on the way that L1 could be integrated in the teaching methodologies. Due to administrative constraints, the study was conducted on one classroom only.

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